

# URGENT ACTION

## COMMUNITIES IN BOJAYÁ, CHOCÓ (WESTERN COLOMBIA) THREATENED BY ARMED GROUPS

Human Rights Defender, Leyner Palacios, has been vocal about the presence of illegal armed groups around the communities of Bojayá. On 31 December 2019, 300 members of the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia placed four of the communities in Bojayá under forced confinement. On 3 January 2020, the AGC threatened Leyner Palacios and gave him two hours to leave Bojayá or they would kill him. We urge the Colombian government to take immediate action to guarantee his protection.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Iván Duque Márquez**

**President of Colombia**

*c/ Minister of Interior*

*Address: Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Bogotá, Colombia*

*Email: [contacto@presidencia.gov.co](mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co)*

*Your Excellency Mr. President,*

*I am writing you to express my serious concern about the forced confinement the communities of Bojayá are currently in, as well as the death threats against Leyner Palacios, a human rights defender from the region, received on 3 January 2020. Mr. Palacios has advocated against the presence of illegal armed groups in the territory of Bojayá.*

*On 31 December 2019, 300 members of the Autodefensas Gaitanistas (AGC) arrived in the community of Pogue and placed Pogue and other communities under forced confinement. Furthermore, on 3 January 2020, they threatened Mr. Palacios, urging him to leave Bojayá or he would be killed.*

*While I am aware that the Colombian Army has taken steps to address the situation in Bojayá, this action requires further attention. Therefore, I urge you to take immediate action to ensure collective measures to guarantee the safety of the communities in Bojaya and to guarantee the safety of Leyner Palacios from threats made by the AGC.*

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leyner Palacios is a survivor of the Bojayá massacre of 2002, as a result, he has become an important social leader. He advocated for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to recognise responsibility for the massacre. As a result of Mr. Palacios' activism the FARC apologised to the communities in Bojayá. Mr. Palacios has received several recognitions for his work, with the most recent being the "World Prize for Pluralism" from the World Centre for Pluralism in Canada.

Because of his work, he has received several threats from illegal armed groups. In June 2018, Palacios was in a workshop in the Puerto Conto community in Bojayá when an unknown man with a suspicious attitude approached the and asked a boy who Leyner Palacios was. The man left the community when he was denied the information.

On Thursday, 18 July 2018, Mr. Palacios received a phone call in which a man told him to "stop bothering with this tale of peace", and that if he didn't get out of Bojayá, they would kill him. Mr. Palacios announced this on 19 July 2018 before the departmental police of Chocó, who would be in charge of processing it before the Attorney General's Office. That same day he went to the Ombudsman's Office, where he filled out a form to be sent to the UNP.

On Monday, 6 August 2018, he received another phone call in which a man told him "you are going to die".

The Indigenous and Afro communities in Chocó State, especially those from Bojayá, have faced serious human rights violations throughout the years of conflict in Colombia – including forced displacement, mass killings, among other human rights violations, occurred at the hands of guerrilla, paramilitary groups and the army.

On 18 October 2019, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action as the Colombian Office of the Ombudsman raised an alert that the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) were still operating in Bojayá, placing at least 2,250 people from Indigenous and Afro communities under forced confinement and life-threatening risk.

On 31 December 2019, the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace announced that 300 members of the AGC arrived in the communities of Pogue, Corazón de Jesús, Loma de Bojayá and Cuia, in Bojayá, and placed them under forced confinement, threatening them to kill them if they announced this. Some villagers were able to escape confinement and spread the word that members of the AGC were giving gifts to the children, trying to recruit them. On 3 January 2020, Mr. Palacios was threatened to leave the community, or he would be killed.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 14 February 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Indigenous and Afro communities of Bojayá (they)

**ADDITIONAL TARGETS:** Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Cres, Knightsbridge, London SW1X 0LN

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/1509/2019/en/>